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operative method of a county library, the larger resources of the whole county are available to everyone in the county. The central library is the storehouse from which may be called any of the special books, which by reason of their limited use, are expensive, and therefore impossible, to the library which is meagerly supported. The enlarged book resources, the best of library tools and equipment, made possible by eliminating useless duplication, constitute an economy and efficiency which is not possible to extension work as carried on through a smaller unit than the county. We have one county library, large enough and efficient enough to command the respect and loyalty of all the people of the county, rather than a number of struggling libraries. This one county library, too, can serve effectively as the storehouse for material of county historical interest, building up one really worth while collection, rather than a number of incomplete ones.

Let us consider the general adaptability of the plan. California offers a glorious example of a state, where, with counties of all sizes and conditions, some of the counties scattered over an area as large as

eastern states, the county library plan has proved a marked success. They are reaching the people in all parts of the county; and instead of the paltry sum for traveling library work formerly appropriated by the state legislature, the income in thirty-five counties in that state for the present year is more than \$415,000. County support has been whole hearted and generous, and it has been so because of the efficiency of the work done.

The county is a large enough unit to yield ample funds for the support of an effective library; and yet it is a unit near enough to the people to command their interest, and become a really definite part of their lives. The smaller unit, which permits an even closer commingling of interest than does the county, can yield but insufficient revenue. This revenue would necessarily be spent in duplicating to a large extent the work and the resources of the other libraries within its immediate territory; but withal, would result in an incomplete service as compared with the county. Therefore, it seems that the county is the unit for library extension through which we can most nearly approach that ideal of service for which we are all striving.

## THE LIBRARY DISTRICT AS A UNIT FOR LIBRARY EXTENSION

By JOHN A. LOWE, *Agent Massachusetts Free Library Commission*

Many of the difficulties and problems of the small country library would be solved if the librarian question were settled. An active, intelligent community; a well organized and completely equipped plant; even a well chosen collection of books often fails to call with sufficient appeal to the librarian so that her service to the town is anything more than mediocre at best. Coöperation from educational societies, and even state aid is a serious problem in many towns because of the fact that the trustees are not able to employ a

trained librarian. Educational influence and plans for social betterment in a community can be obtained only through the library where up-to-date methods of organization and administration are in force.

Obviously, sufficient funds and popular desire for better library conditions will bring about a demand for trained librarians, even as they have brought about a condition which will permit only trained school teachers.

Briefly, this is the problem which faces the profession in Massachusetts rural li-

braries. How shall efficient, trained or experienced librarians be supplied in towns in which the library is open only two days a week, and the average librarian's annual salary amounts to \$150?

Because of existing conditions, the Free Public Library Commission of Massachusetts decided to try an experiment of a supervising librarian for a group of libraries in neighboring towns. The financial coöperation of the local library boards was sought. The commission's part was authorized by the law permitting direct aid to libraries in small towns. The scheme was similar in form to that of the Massachusetts Board of Education plan for district superintendents.

The commission's plan provided that a trained and wholly competent librarian be engaged to oversee the activities of librarians in a given neighborhood. She would work with full approval and in harmony with the boards of trustees, carry on library publicity work with teachers and pupils, clubs, societies, churches and seek to bring about closer relations between the libraries under their direction. Her efforts outside the library would be stressed quite as much as those inside and would be equally important.

This plan has worked out satisfactorily in some respects. The trustee of a large city library took three days each week of the time of the supervising librarian. At that library she gave instruction to the members of the staff in modern library methods, directed the work of recataloging and gave weekly instruction to school

children in the use of the library. She conducted classes for adults in literature and travel. The other days of the week were similarly occupied at small town libraries.

Some of the difficulties which come up in practice in trying to introduce such a system are these: It is our experience that in the small towns funds are so small for libraries that even if the salaries now being received by the several librarians were all put together they would not be enough to secure the quality of trained directorship which we have been giving. Again, many of the librarians have been in their positions for fifteen or twenty years, do not readily take to new methods, and still their removal is often a matter of great delicacy. Town politics are very individual and voters often manifest unwillingness to coöperate with outsiders, and there is an evident spirit of suspicion regarding attempts of this sort. In the case of supervising librarians it might be well worth while to find some bright local talent and train it up until such time as the supervising librarian shall be no longer needed.

Nevertheless it is hoped that the supervising librarian will supply the needed leaven in making the library of greater usefulness. If the scheme is worked out on a proper working basis, there is no reason why the number of such librarians should not be increased so that all sections of the state would be covered, and a noticeable upbuilding of library interests and work be felt.

## THE TOWNSHIP AS A UNIT FOR LIBRARY EXTENSION

BY MAYME C. SNIPES, *Librarian, Plainfield (Ind.) Public Library*

The Plainfield Public Library has always been open to the township. In the early history of the library the tax was so meager that all the library could do for the rural patron was to encourage his patronage and to meet his needs as best it could whenever he came to the library.

But when the township law was amended and the minimum tax was raised to 5/10 of a mill, this gave new impetus for aiding the rural districts. From this time on rural extension began in earnest. Not the extension that we thought was ideal and most effective, for at this time house